

START Program Operating

The Montana Department of Corrections' newest program for keeping offenders out of prison is called START, the Sanction, Treatment, Assessment, Revocation and Transition center at Warm Springs.

This 80-bed facility, which opened Dec. 12, 2005, has so far been able to divert from prison 77 percent of the more than 250 offenders admitted to the program since it started. The average length of stay in the first four months was 34 days.

Two groups of offenders are placed in the START program.

The first group contains those who have committed serious violations of the conditions of their parole, conditional release, prerelease center placement or probation. The START staff assesses these individuals to determine if they can be placed in community-based options as an alternative to prison. It is anticipated that the length of stay for offenders on this “**revocation**” status will be range from 10 days to 120 days.

The second group consists of offenders sent to START as a “**sanction**” for up to 30 days by a community corrections hearings officer for violating conditions of parole, conditional release, prerelease center placement or probation. These offenders typically have several minor violations of their parole or probation rules, and the sanction is an attempt to get them back on track without sending them to prison.

The facility is designed for offenders with only “technical” violations. Offenders facing additional felony offenses are not eligible for placement at START.

The state saves an average of about \$48,000 per offender by placement in START instead of two years in prison.

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